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A G A I N S T  
B I G G O T R Y,  
A N D F O R  
C h r i s t i a n C a t h o l i c i s m.

Being a Discourse on Rom. 14. 17. Delivered  
at Andover in Hampshire.

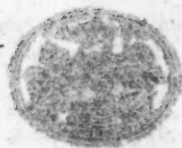
By HENRY CHANDLER.

*Nunquam de Dogmatibus Christus differnit, sed sæpe, & ubique, imo  
semper de vivendi Sinceritate.*

Mat. 23. 23. *W<sup>h</sup> unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites; for ye  
pay Tyth of Mint, and Anise, and Cummin, and have omitted the  
weightier Matters of the Law.*

Jam. 3. 17. *But the Wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then  
peaceable, gentle, and easie to be intreated.*

L O N D O N: Printed for John Lawrence, at the Angel  
in the Poultry, 1699.



To my Generous and much Respected Friend,  
Mr. Gabriel Goldney of Andover.

**T**HE following Discourse was delivered in your hearing with an honest Design, and 'tis now Presented you in compliance with your Request: You some time since intimated, That the bearing of it was very grateful to you; I pray God it may in the review be altogether as profitable. 'Tis not Calculated for the Interest of any Party of Christians, as a Party needlessly Dividing from, or Hurtfully Opposing the rest; but (if I mistake not) equally serving the real Interest of all. Let my Tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and my right hand forget her cunning, rather than by Word or Writing I should wilfully promote Faction to the damage of Substantial Uncontroverted Christianity. No Man on Earth more sincerely wisheth than my self, that all Names of Distinction amongst Protestants were for ever buried under a just and righteous Accomodation; no Man more heartily laments the Schisms that are amongst us, or more unfeignedly longs for a thorough Healing of them. I doubt not but that there are multitudes of different Denominations that can easily more Skilfully Prescribe for the Healing of our Distempers than my self, but other Persons receiving more Talents than my self, is no Discharge to me from a faithful managing and improving what I have receiv'd. Nor must a Sense of the Deficiency of my Performances so far dishearten me as to prevent my just Endeavours: Wherefore I am willing that you should have this Discourse to read, after your hearing of it, and to communicate it as you shall judge expedient: And to this I am the more inclined, for that the Discourse hath been expressly approv'd by two worthy Ministers, whose Judgment we both value. One of them is pleased thus to express himself: "—As to the Discourse it self, I could not but be pleased with it: It does with great Piety, Solidity and Justice, expose that which I take to be the most prevailing and dangerous Distemper of the Age, viz. a placing our Religion in, and laying out our Zeal upon little insignificant things (as Words, or Phrases, Speculative Opinions, or meer Circumstances and Opinions) in being for or against these; in which, supposing we be in the right, we are (we can be) but very little the better; but if it shou'd happen we are under a mistake, we must needs be greatly the worse. To place the Kingdom of God in such things is the common mischief of our Day; hence we are broken into

"Parties, and by the same Spirit are our shameful Divisions fomen-  
 "ted and kept up; and 'tis the Cure of this Spirit that alone can  
 "effectually heal the Breaches there are amongst us. Nor is this  
 "over magnifying our self-devised Religiousness, and confining  
 "thereupon the Kingdom of God within the Pale of our Respective  
 "Parties, the less pernicious and fatal, for being so exceeding  
 "common: Hence it is that there is so visible a Decay of Christian  
 "Charity; that there is so notorious a disregard of the most impor-  
 "tant and distinguishing Instances of Christianity, through the  
 "misapplying of Zeal to the little Impertinencies that neither need nor  
 "deserve it——If this Discourse fall into the hands of such as need  
 "it most, and the Divine Spirit please to accompany it, I cannot  
 "doubt but its success will be such, as will greatly promote and help  
 "on a more Peaceful and Flourishing State of Christ's Kingdom  
 "amongst us; for which end it shall be followed with the fervent  
 "Prayers of your affectionate Brother, &c.

Sir, When I read these Lines, and considered the worth of the  
 Person that wrote them, and when I remember'd that another very  
 valuable Minister had said of the Discourse, That he wish'd there  
 were Ten Thousand of such Sermons Printed, and scattered up and  
 down; I found my self less unwilling to venture upon appearing thus  
 in publick, than I was before. I doubt not but that the most diseased  
 will find fault; no matter for that, let me be blamed by them, so  
 I may but heal them; but if that be not the Issue, I shall have the  
 satisfaction that accompanies an honest Design and Endeavour. May  
 the infinitely great and good God requite with Spiritual and Eternal  
 Blessings the Respect and Kindness you have shewn me. May you ex-  
 perience more and more the Solid and Durable Comforts of Practical  
 and Peaceable Christianity; may you be the Temple of the Holy  
 Ghost, and your Family a little Church; may all good things be mul-  
 tiplied to you, and you made better by all; may I and mine meet You  
 and Yours with Joy, at the right hand of Jesus in that Day; may  
 fiery Faction continually decrease, and Faith, Love and Holiness grow  
 exceedingly every where: These, Sir, are the Sincere and Fervent  
 Desires of

Your Obligated Friend and Servant,  
 In the Work of the Gospel,

Andover, Aug.  
 16. 1698.

Henry Chandler.

Romans



## Romans XIV. xvii.

Οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ βρώσις καὶ πόσις

*For the Kingdom of GOD is not Meat and Drink.*

**T**HE Decay of Holy Zeal for Practical Godliness, and its woful Degenerating into an Uncharitable Factious Contending for little Notions, and the disputable Appendages of Religion, is too too visible every where. And of such scandalous Aspect, and destructive Tendency is it, that it deserves to be lamented with (if it were possible) Tears of Blood. And the Cure of this Distemper (raging amongst all sorts) to be attended unto with the most Speedy, Skilful, and Industrious Application. This is my Serious Thought, and the reason of my pitching upon this Text, as the Foundation of the Present, and some following Discourses.

Which Text I purpose, with God's help, to manage with the best of my Skill, and with all possible Faithfulness and Impartiality for the aforesaid End; not caring whether I do hereby Please or Displease Men, so I may but be Approv'd of God, as one that hath taken the proper Method to Build his Kingdom in the World, and particularly in this Town.

I shall endeavour to acquaint you with the Occasion and Sense of the Words, that I may clear my way for raising the Doctrine that I intend more largely to prosecute.

The occasion of these Words (as of the whole Chapter, which is one continued Argument) was this;

Many of the Jews being, by the Doctrine and Miracles of the Apostles, convinced that Jesus was the Promised Messiah, Believed in Him, and became Christians; but as yet not understanding the full design of the Christian Institution; mistaking the Nature and Use of the Mosaick Dispensation, and possibly misunderstanding the Words in the *Old Testament*, signifying the long duration of that *Economy*, for Perpetuity, as though God meant by them that it should be continued to the end of the World; they concluded that their Believing in Christ was no disengagement from *Judaism*, but thought they were as much obliged to observe the Law of *Moses* (even the Ceremonial) as ever.

ever. They looked not on the *Christian Institution* as what was now to succeed in the room and place of *Judaism*, to be laid aside, but as a Supplement to it with which it was to be continued, supposing they should be never the worse *Christians* for their Observation of the *Jewish Rituals*.

Nay, they not only stuck themselves to the Ceremonial Law, but also took upon them to oblige the *Gentile Converts* to the same thing, *Acts* 15. 5. *But there rose up certain of the Sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses.*

The *Gentiles* having never been under *Moses Law* as such, nor apprehending any Obligation upon them now to come under it, took no notice of what the *Jews* said in Vindication of their Superstition, but stuck to their Liberty, and were as fond of it, as the other were of their burdensome Yoke.

This occasion'd uncharitable Contentions amongst the two Parties, rais'd Disputes and Quarrellings, put 'em upon Despising and Judging of one another, as is intimated by the Prohibition, *ver.* 3. *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth.* The *Gentile Christians* ate all Meats, even those forbidden by the Ceremonial Law, and looked upon the *Jew* as a scrupulous humerfome Fool, for making a difference.

The *Jewish Christian* (or Christianized *Jew*) regarding the Injunctions and Prohibitions of the Ceremonial Law, ate but such Meats as that allow'd; religiously refusing the rest, judging the *Gentile Christian* as an ungodly Sinner, for his violation of *Moses Law*, and shunn'd his Communion, as a Prophane and Unholy Person, as is intimated, *ver.* 1.

To Compose these Differences, and persuade these two differing Parties of Christians to Friendly Conversation and Christian Communion, the Apostle spends this whole Chapter, out of which I have taken my Text, and the seven first Verses of the following Chapter.

He maketh use of many Arguments to persuade these Contenders to an Accommodation; that which my Text affords is the comparative Trivialness of the things that were the Matter of Debate; they were such as that Mens Opinions and Practices about them contributed next to nothing to the promoting of God's Kingdom in the World.

Persons of different, yea, contrary Judgment and Practice, with respect to them, may be both good and acceptable Subjects of the King of Heaven; both may be under the power of Grace here, and dwell in Glory together hereafter. And, on the other hand, Persons of both Persuasions may be destitute of Grace, and miss of Glory, how strict soever they may be in their Practice, with respect to the Matters in Dispute betwixt them. *For the Kingdom, &c. q. d.* These things commend us not to God, for neither if we Eat are we the better, neither if we Eat not are we the worse, 1 Cor. 8. 8. It is not a Persuasion one way or other, about these lesser Matters, that bespeaks Persons Govern'd by the Spirit of Christ, or Intitled unto, or fit for Heaven. By *Meat* and *Drink* are *Synecdochically* comprehended all other Things of like nature that were then contested. And when 'tis said, *These are not the Kingdom of God*, the Expression is *Metonymical*, signifying that they contribute next to nothing, if any thing at all, either to the Building or Destroying of the Kingdom of God amongst Men. And therefore 'twas sinful Folly in either Party to be so Hot and Eager in their Disputes about them, and so disaffected to each other, upon account of a different Opinion and Practice, with respect to them; this is the Sense.

The Text hath Two Parts;

*A Negative;*

*A Positive.*

1. A Negative. *The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink.* The design of which is to prevent our making a mistake about the things that render us, through Christ, acceptable to God.

The former stops up a by-path to prevent our straying in the way of Sin and Ruine, the latter directs us in the true way to Present and Future Happiness.

I begin with the Negative Part, *The Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink*, which affords us this useful and seasonable Doctrine, *sc.* A Zeal for the lesser Matters of Religion conduceth nothing to the promoting of the Kingdom of God in our selves or others.

In handling of this Point I shall observe this Method, *sc.*

1. I shall endeavour to prevent your making of Mistakes, as to the meaning of it.
2. I shall give you the true Sense and Meaning of it, and prove it (both together.)
3. Make Application.

1. I shall endeavour to prevent, &c. But first I will lay down this Preliminary Proposition, *sc.* There are greater, and there are lesser Matters in Religion. *All* that is in the Christian Institution taught and enjoyn'd, is not *equally* necessary to be known and practis'd by us, in order to our acceptable serving of the Redeemer here, or our comfortable appearing before Him in another World. There are some things upon account of which Men are more valuable in God's Estimation, than they are upon the account of others; and there are things that do more vastly advantage our Souls, improve our Natures, and promote our Felicity, than others. In a word, there are Doctrines and Precepts that *must* be known and observ'd, or we *cannot* be Happy, and there are such, which tho' we be ignorant of them (and consequently do not *designedly* address our selves to the Observation of them) we may yet be Happy. The Precepts that may justly be reckoned and called the *greater and weightier*, are such as enjoyn,

Internal, Moral Rectitude, which is our necessary subjective Capacity for Converse with the Glorious God.

Serious Application to the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour.

Such as respect the Essence and Substance of Christian Religion, the Life and Power of Godliness, as direct more immediately to Holy Practice, as are clearly and plainly delivered, and as are of constant and perpetual Obligation and Use.

The lesser Precepts are such as direct about the Ornamental Accidents of External Worship.

Such whereof the Knowledge is not absolutely necessary to Salvation.

Such as direct unto Duties of meer positive Institution, and as are but darkly and obscurely delivered, and not at all Times, or in all Cases obliging.

That these two sorts of Precepts may be thus distinguished into greater and lesser, that is more and less necessary, is evident, as by the express Testimony of Holy Scripture, so from this consideration following, *sc.* were it otherwise, one of the two following Absurdities must be granted. 1. Either that the Observation of nothing in the Christian Religion was necessary to Salvation: Or, 2. That so much was necessary that no  
Man

Man could be Saved. For there's not a Man upon the Earth, that perfectly knows all the several Precepts that are couched and intimated in the pregnant Stile of Holy Scripture, together with them that lye upon the Surface of the Text, obvious to the most careless Eye; and no Man can *designedly* address him to observe those Precepts that he knows not. *But we know but in part*, 1 Cor. 13. 9. The wisest Man's Knowledge is here necessarily imperfect, and therefore his Obedience cannot be otherwise; wherefore it irrefragably follows, that all things enjoyn'd in Holy Scripture, are not equally necessary; wherefore the Distinction abovesaid is just and needful.

Now when I say, that a Zeal for these lesser Matters conduceth nothing to the promoting of the Kingdom of God in our selves, or others, neither of these things immediately following is intended.

1. That these lesser Things are utterly useles: or,
2. That any Man hath a License to be ignorant of them, that hath Capacity and Opportunity to Study them.
3. That any Man may, without Sin, act contrary to his Persuasion, with respect to them: or,
4. That a Man may not, in any case, give to another his Sense and Opinion about them: or,
5. That a Man may Profess, Assent to what he knows to be falsly affirmed, or approve as good what he knows to be badly enjoyn'd by Men with respect to them, that he might avoid Persecution.

Neither of these Five Things is intended; for all the Scripture being given by Divine Inspiration, every part of it is profitable, either for Doctrine, or Reproof, or Correction, or Instruction in Righteousness, 2 Tim. 3. 16. And every Man ought to acquaint himself with the whole Book of God, for his own and others good, as he hath Capacity and Opportunity, he being the most perfect Christian, who is most perfectly acquainted with, and conformed to that blessed Rule of Holy Perfection.

Nor can any Man act contrary to the Dictates of a well informed Conscience, even in the lesser Matters of Religion, without sin and danger; for our Lord saith, *Mat. 5. 19. Who-soever shall break one of the least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Moreover, a Christian may safely give his Opinion about these lesser Matters, when he is asked by a Person that desires to know for his own Direction, and not for Contentious Cavilling.

And undoubtedly, he that professeth Assent to a known Falshood, and professeth Approbation of that which he knows to be evil, with respect unto these Matters, to avoid Persecution, is seeking to save his Life by those Methods that tend to Eternal Death, *Matth. 10. 39.*

Having thus endeavoured to prevent your mistaking the Sense of the Doctrine, I come now to tell you positively what I do intend by it.

And there are these things meant by it;

1. That Mens employing their Gifts and Parts, and spending their time chiefly in the Defence of their Notions and Apprehensions about these Matters, renders them never the more acceptable unto God. Nor,

2. Do they hereby at all better their own Spirits: Nor,

3. Are the Souls of others hereby served: Nor,

4. Is God's Kingdom hereby enlarged, or his Honour and Glory promoted. Of these in their order.

1. Mens Employing, &c.

God Accepteth or Refuseth no Man upon account of such little things as are (in a comparative Sense at least) the Disputable Circumstances of Religion. He accepteth holy Souls of different Apprehensions about them. *Rom. 14. 18. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God* — i. e. Which way soever he inclines with respect to the Matters in debate: God rejecteth an Hypocritical, Unholy, Unregenerate Professor, of what Party, Opinion, or Denomination soever he be. If he be Orthodox as to these little things, it matters not; *For Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the Commandments of God*, *1 Cor. 7. 19.* Wherefore Mens over-fondness of these smaller Matters, their eager Disputes about them, their consuming their Time in the Study and Defence of them, with the neglect of Matters of greater Necessity and Usefulness, cannot (by sober Persons) be thought what will recommend them to the Wise and Holy God, who as He made Men capable of greater and better Studies, expects that they employ themselves about them. For the fuller Proof of this Particular, let it be considered, That God taketh no delight in Fools or Hypocrites.

1. Not

1. Not in Fools. *He hath no pleasure in fools*, Eccl. 5. 4. But Men that are Zealous for the smaller Matters, whilst they neglect Things of greater Importance, are Fools. *Ye Fools*, said our Saviour to the Pharisees, whose Character (by Him given) was, *That they tythed Mint, Annise and Cummin, and neglected the weightier Matters of the Law.*

Men of this Kidney, (especially if they be successful in their little Factious Attempts) are ready to account themselves Wise, and those of their Party are too prone (too prodigally) to Applaud them as such. But they are Fools. He's a Fool that, being in a leaky Ship, minds the Painting of his particular Cabbin, more than the stopping of the Leak that endangers the whole Ship. And what is he better that spends his Time in the pursuit of those Things, that serves only for the recommending his particular Notions, and neglects to promote that practical Godliness in the World, the general decay of which threatens the whole Christian Interest? He's a Fool that being Sick of the Plague, slights the Advice of an able Faithful Physician, because he speaks not the Dialect or Idiom of his particular County, or had not his License granted him by such a particular College of Physicians. And he's a far worse Fool, that being a sinful Creature refuseth the help of Charitable Skilful Christians or Ministers, because they are not in all Things of his Mind in lesser Matters of Religion, and that confines his Addresses for help to Persons (it may be far less Skilful) of his own Opinion and Party. How well pleased soever such Persons may be with their Folly, 'tis utterly unreasonablen and impious to expect that God will shew himself altogether such an one as themselves.

2. God taketh no delight in Hypocrites. This is manifest from the terrible Denunciation of Wrath against the Jewish People, upon the account of Hypocrites amongst them, *Isa. 9. 17. Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young Men, neither shall have mercy on their Fatherless and Widows: FOR every one is an Hypocrite*—— And from our Saviour's oft-repeated Woe thundred out against such, *Matth. 23.* But such as are chiefly concern'd for the lesser Matters of Religion are Hypocrites, as appears by Christ's branding the *Pharisees* (whose grand Fault this was) so oft with this Name, *Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites*, no less than seven times in that Chapter.



And is not he an Hypocrite that plays with Religion? And doth not he play with Religion, that spends his Fervour and Vigour about the Appendages and Circumstantials of it, whilst the great and weighty Matters are neglected?

(2.) Men do not hereby better their own Spirits. I say not that Men do not hereby please themselves by gratifying their wanton Fancies, and magnifying their idolized Friends. I question not but such Foolish Zealots are as well pleased with these their Childish Impertinencies, as their Children are with their Jointed Babies and Hobby-Horses. But their Laughter is mad, and their Mirth what doth it? Certain it is, that their Souls are not improved by the excessive Study and Pursuit of those things, there is no aptitude to promote such a thing, I mean when sought and pursu'd with the neglect of the Life of Religion. What will a Man's Orthodoxness, with respect unto the Doctrine of the Externals, the Modes and Circumstances of Worship, contribute to the healing of his Pride, Passion, or Worldliness, or any other Distemper of his Mind, if he be continually diverted from a close Application of the Specificks that the wise and good Physician of Souls hath prepared for the Cure of such and such Distempers? If a Man that hath a Tertian Ague, should continually spend his Time in studying in what Vehicle such a Medicine for his Distemper should be taken in, and when he hath fixed his Determination, should spend the rest of his Time in endeavouring to bring over his Neighbours that are otherwise minded to his Opinion, would this cure his Distemper (think you) though he never applied the proper Medicine that he hath by him?

To Apply it. May not a Man be right as to the particular (less Principal) Thing he contends for, and yet as Proud, Contentious, Turbulent, Selfish, Uncharitable, and Unrighteous as ever? If a Man be in Heart no true Christian, will his sticking to, and contending for such Things make him one? If he be a weak languishing Christian, will this revive the Power of Religion in his Soul? Yea rather, will it not put out the few Sparks that are left?

(3.) Men do not hereby serve the Souls of others, whom by these Methods they would Profelyte to their particular Opinions. There are amongst all Parties of Christians in this Nation, *Some* that act in this Matter with that unwearied Industry, and rejoice in their Success with such an air of Complacency,

placence, as if they were in this matter as narrow of their Charity as the Romanists, and counted none good Christians but those of their own Party ; they act as if there was nothing required of Men in order to Salvation, but subscribing their Canons, subjecting themselves to their particular Modes of Worship, and walking with them in their Way. But as such an Imagination is altogether groundless, and very absurd, so those are most wretchedly imposed upon, that suffer themselves to be Captivated by it. And I will confidently assert, That there is nothing in the Purest, most Orthodox, and Apostolical Party of Protestants which the other Parties have not, to make amends for such a Deception. If any Man should be told by a Leader of any Party of Protestants, That if he will be a good Christian, please God, and go to Heaven when he dies, he must be one of them; he must Subscribe their Canons, follow their Directory, take their Church-Covenant, he must Pray by a Book, he must not Pray by a Book, he must go to the Parish Church, he must go to Meeting, to this Meeting, to that Meeting ; I say, whosoever talk at this rate, do miserably deceive those that they persuade : Nor have they any thing in their Communion, which other Societies have not, to make their deluded Profelites amends. Nay, so far is this industrious Proselyting of Men to a particular Opinion from being a piece of Service to Souls, that 'tis a manifest Injury to them, as it fills the Christian World with woful Schisms, diverts from the more important Duties of Christian Religion, as it stumbles the Ignorant, and hardens the Prophane in their Contempt of all Religion.

(4.) God's Kingdom is not enlarged, nor his Honour and Glory promoted by such a Course. Men may thus People their respective Assemblies, and encrease the number of Votaries to their particular Faction or Party, but not one good Subject is or can be hereby added to the King of Saints. Men may hereby dishonestly drein the Societies of Christians differing from them in their Opinion about these lesser Matters, and weaken their Hands by enticing their useful Friends from them, but, not a Soul can they by this Method bring them from the power of Satan into the Kingdom of God, it hath not the least Aptitude or Fitness to produce so noble an effect. For the Persons such Sticklers would by this method gain over to their Party, are either good or bad, now which soever be affirmed

firmed the matter comes all to one. If he be a bad Man, destitute of the saving Grace of God, he is never the less so for espousing the Opinions, and conforming himself to the Customs and Usages of this or that Party. If he keep his Vicious Habits, and remain an Impenitent Unbeliever, he is a bad Man still, with which Party soever of Christians he sides. If he falls in with the Conformists, he is a wicked Man notwithstanding; if he should thence be gotten over to the Presbyterians, he is a wicked Man still; if he should remove his Tabernacle and pitch amongst the Independents, he is a wicked Man nevertheless: And let him change his Associates as often as he will, though he should happen at last to light upon the Truth, as to Matters in Controversy, though he should join with the most Orthodox and strict Party, though he should really and in Truth be of the same mind with them, as to their distinguishing Opinions and Modes of Worship, though he should have and manifest a Zeal for them, yet he is a wicked Man nevertheless, and no more the Heartly and Loyal Subject of the Redeemer than he was before; *For Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping the Commandments of God*, 1 Cor. 7. 19.

'Tis not Conformity or Non-Conformity, 'tis not the Espousing the Interest of Diocesan Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Independency or Anabaptistry, that will make a good Man of a bad. This will not contribute any thing to the changing a Slave of Satan into a Freeman of Christ; wherefore 'tis manifest that *Factional Zealots* are not at all serviceable to the Interest of God, by gaining over *bad Men* to their Party.

But it may be some will say, If the Person gain'd be a good Man, the case (sure) is alter'd; if he be brought from a less pure to a more pure way of Worship, this (doubtless) promotes the Kingdom of God.

I answer; First remember that my Discourse is confin'd to the Matters controverted by Protestants, who severally and jointly hold to and practise the more necessary and important Matters of Faith and Worship. Now I say, it must be granted, that all Deviations from the Rule of the Word in the Worship of God, are Sins, and every Sin is more or less obstructive of the Kingdom of God: It must also be acknowledged, that convincing Men of their Mistakes, and reclaiming them from their Irregularities in the Worship of God, is  
both

both Charitable and Pious. It is a friendly Office performed for the Soul of our Neighbour, and an act of Service to the King of Heaven. All this is readily granted. Yet notwithstanding, it may be safely affirm'd that the Kingdom of God is not served by Persons spending their Zeal about lesser Matters. For when Persons lay a greater stress upon them than their Nature requires, when they talk of them as if they were the only, or chief and principal Things in Religion to be minded, despising, or judging and separating from those that differ from them in their Opinions and Practices, with respect to them: I say, when it is thus (and this is the Case I have all along intended) though these Men should be in the right, yet if they endeavour to imprint their Image upon the Persons they wou'd instruct, and if they are successful as to the whole of their Design, 'tis certain that they do more hurt than good. For, though it be yielded that they are serviceable to those they Proselyte, as they Correct their Mistakes, and guide them into the way of Truth, yet in as much as at the same time they cherish and nourish in them Factious, Dividing, Uncharitable, Turbulent Inclinations, 'tis manifest, that instead of making them better Subjects to the King of Heaven, they make them much worse than they were. Such Mens new acquired Light having too much Brimstone in it, serves but to fire them, and all about them. What though they are in some little thing more Orthodox and Regular than they were before, if withal they grow Conceited and Proud, Pragmatical and Censorious, Schismatical and Turbulent; if with the increase of their Light there be a decrease of their Love, Humility and Peaceableness, they are no more better'd than Men are happily relieved against the Darkness of the Night, by the Light that comes from their Fired Houses. Such a zealous promoting of Opinion may spoil Christ's good Subjects, but it cannot mend them. Moreover, the Honour and Glory of God is not promoted by such a course. God is then glorify'd by us, when in our Lives we shew by some significant Actions, that our Souls are impress'd with the likeness of the Divine Perfections; as Wisdom, Holiness, Justice, Goodness, &c. I say, when by wise, holy, just and good Actions, we shew to the World that our Souls are stamped with the Likeness of the Divine Wisdom, Holiness, Justice and Goodness, then we may be said to Glorifie God in the World——But is a busie, uncharitable, contending for, disputable

putable Matters of Opinion, to the prejudice of Practical Godliness; what will argue our Souls to be thus impress'd? Or, will any sober Person say, That God is hereby Glorified? Is it consistent with an Understanding Belief of the Wisdom of God, to imagine that He made our noble Souls to be only, or principally buied about such little things as many will Christen with the Name of Religion? Or, can a Man that heartily believes God is good, persuade himself to think, that He should oblige us to spend our Time and Strength in recommending and supporting those things that have nothing in their Nature to entertain our Minds to Satisfaction, Minds that are capable of Conversing with the Glorious God, his high Perfections, and excellent Works? They know neither God, nor their own Souls, that can think so.

*Application, by way of  
Instruction,  
Reprehension,  
Exhortation.*

1. *Instruction.* This Truth leads us into several others, *viz.*

1. There should be an Harmony in Affection amongst those between whom there is a Difference in Opinion.

2. Uniformity in Worship is not necessary to the Flourishing of Christianity.

3. A further Union amongst *Protestants* is truly desirable.

4. 'Tis no Sin for a Christian in some Cases to conceal his Opinion. Of these in order.

1. There should be an Harmony, &c. Or thus, Christians of different Sentiments and Practices, with respect unto the lesser Matters of Religion, should unfeignedly and affectionately love one the other; their little Differings should not occasion the abating of their mutual Love. God loves them all, and therefore they should love one another. Thus the Apostle himself improves this Doctrine, *Rom. 15. 5. Now the God of patience, and consolation, grant you to be like minded, δὴν ὑμῶν τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν* This Expression is sometimes used to signifie Agreement in Opinion and Judgment; but here (I take it) 'tis put to signifie Union and Affection; as the same Expression is used, *Phil. 2. 2. Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love.* — And the whole Context seems to favour this Interpretation, for the design of the Apostle throughout the Fourteenth Chapter, seems

seems plainly to be the begetting a good Understanding amongst the contending Christians of his Time, to perswade them to bear with, be friendly, and kind, and loving one to another : And therefore 'tis very allowable to suppose, that in the close of his Discourse upon this Subject, he doth by this Expression intend the same thing, especially seeing 'tis manifest that the words are to be so understood in that, *Phil. 2. 2.* and that the very last words the Apostle spends upon this Argument are these, *sc. Wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the Glory of God, ver. 7.* And Sirs, what hinders that Christians of different Opinions and Perswasions about lesser matters, love not one another better ? Seeing the things they differ about are not things of great weight, or flat necessity, seeing the Interest of God suffers not by the variety of Mens Opinions about them, seeing God doth not value or slight Men upon account of them, seeing both Parties may be acceptable to God, why should they not love one another ? Why should they not in Honour prefer one another ? Why should they not have good thoughts one of another ? True it is, Men cannot think or believe as they list, or as their Neighbours and Friends would have them, but one would think they should love according to their Saviour's Command and Example : He loves all the pious and good, whether Conformists or Non-Conformists, Church-men or Dissenters, Presbyterian or Independent, or whatever Fool's Coat of distinction their uncharitable envious Neighbours put upon them. He by his Apostle commends a Catholick Love, or a Love to All the Saints, *Ephes. 1. 15.* wherefore 'tis a hard case if Christians of different Opinions cannot love one another.

*Objection* But perhaps some will say, How can I love those that I see disorderly and Erroneous ?

*Answer* ~~to~~ *Wife* Objection indeed ! canst thou love none but those that are in all things Orthodox and orderly ? Then thou must love thy Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Minister, yea, or thine own self no more, for all on this side Heaven have their Mistakes, and are guilty of their Irregularities. *We know but in part*, saith the Apostle, *1 Cor. 13. 9.* and in many things we offend all, *James 3. 2.* But hark Christian what are those Errors and Irregularities that hinder thy loving of thy Fellow Christian ? Doth he deny the Catholick Church, that one Body ? Doth he deny the Holy Ghost, that one



putable Matters of Opinion, to the prejudice of Practical Godliness; what will argue our Souls to be thus impress'd? Or, will any sober Person say, That God is hereby Glorified? Is it consistent with an Understanding Belief of the Wisdom of God, to imagine that He made our noble Souls to be only, or principally busied about such little things as many will Christen with the Name of Religion? Or, can a Man that heartily believes God is good, persuade himself to think, that He should oblige us to spend our Time and Strength in recommending and supporting those things that have nothing in their Nature to entertain our Minds to Satisfaction, Minds that are capable of Conversing with the Glorious God, his high Perfections, and excellent Works? They know neither God, nor their own Souls, that can think so.

*Application, by way of  
Instruction,  
Reprehension  
Exhortation.*

1. *Instruction.* This Truth leads us into several others, *viz.*

1. There should be an Harmony in Affection amongst those between whom there is a Difference in Opinion.

2. Uniformity in Worship is not necessary to the Flourishing of Christianity.

3. A further Union amongst *Protestants* is truly desirable.

4. 'Tis no Sin for a Christian in some Cases to conceal his Opinion. Of these in order.

1. There should be an Harmony, &c. Or thus, Christians of different Sentiments and Practices, with respect unto the lesser Matters of Religion, should unfeignedly and affectionately love one the other; their little Differings should not occasion the abating of their mutual Love. God loves them all, and therefore they should love one another. Thus the Apostle himself improves this Doctrine, *Rom. 15. 5. Now the God of patience, and consolation, grant you to be like minded, δὴν ὅμων τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν* This Expression is sometimes used to signify Agreement in Opinion and Judgment; but here (I take it) 'tis put to signify Union and Affection; as the same Expression is used, *Phil. 2. 2. Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love.* — And the whole Context seems to favour this Interpretation, for the design of the Apostle throughout the Fourteenth Chapter, seems



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*Answer.* A wise Objection indeed ! canst thou love none but those that are in all things Orthodox and orderly ? Then thou must love thy Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Minister, yea, or thine own self no more, for all on this side Heaven have their Mistakes, and are guilty of their Irregularities. *We know but in part,* saith the Apostle, *1 Cor. 13. 9.* and in many things we offend all, *James 3. 2.* But hark Christian what are those Errors and Irregularities that hinder thy loving of thy Fellow Christian ? Doth he deny the Catholick Church, that one Body ? Doth he deny the Holy Ghost, that one Spirit ?

Spirit? Doth he disown the Belief of the Heavenly Glory, that one hope of our Calling? Or doth he deny the One Lord Jesus, the one Faith; Baptism, or God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all? Perhaps thou wilt say, No, no, he is not gone so far as that comes to, he owns all these. Does he? then (to speak a soft word) thou art a foolish Wretch, if thou canst not love him because he thinks and speaks somewhat differing from thee, about the Circumstantials of Religion——But thou say'st he is disorderly——what meanest thou? Is he Prophane, Intemperate, Unjust, or Unmerciful? It may be thou wilt say, No, I can lay none of this to his Charge; as to the main he seems to live a Sober, Righteous, and a Godly Life, but he is not of my mind and way in the Worship of God. he was not admitted to the Lord's Supper as I was, he says not his Prayers as I do mine, he comes not to the same place of Worship that I do——

And is this the reason why thou canst not love him? Let me tell thee freely, whoever thou art, thou hast great reason to question whether thou thy self lovest God or no, and for thy reason why thou canst not so heartily love thy Fellow Christian; thou wouldst have given as good an one if thou hadst said the reason was because he hath a Mole in his Face, a spot upon his Coat, or another fashion'd Ribbon in his Hat than thou hast; for these are as solid Reasons why thou shouldst not heartily love such as I have described, as the others are.

2. Hence learn, Uniformity in Worship is not necessary to the Flourishing of Christianity in the World. The Kingdom of God may be in a prosperous and flourishing Condition, though all do not Worship in the same manner, or with the same Ceremonies exactly. Because the Kingdom of God consisteth not in such little things. That there be Unity among Christians is necessary, they must be united in the same Object of Worship the ever-Blessed and Glorious Trinity, in the same Mediator the Lord Jesus Christ; in the same Guide and Director in Worship the Holy Ghost, in the same Rule of Worship (as to the substance of Worship at least) the Holy Scriptures; in the same end of Worship, the Glory of God in their Eternal Salvation. But that there should be amongst the several Assemblies of Worshippers an exact Uniformity as to all the Modes and Circumstances of Worship, this is (I think not possible, but I am sure) not necessary to the flourishing of Christianity;

Christianity, for the Kingdom of God is not Circumstance or Ceremony.

But alas ! how do Persons of all denominations (some at least) talk as if they thought the quite contrary ; the high Flyers of all Denominations talk and act as if they thought the Kingdom of God was nothing else but Circumstance and Ceremony. Ask the rigid Church-man's Opinion, and he'll tell you 'twill never be good days till all come to Worship God Almighty with the laudable Ceremonies of the Church of *England* ; he'll tell you, that there are no true Ministers but those that have Episcopal Ordination, no true Sacraments but what are Administred by such Ministers, no true Churches where there are not true Sacraments, no Salvation out of the true Church : That is, in a word, that there are no true Churches or Christians that are in a State of Salvation, but those of his Way ; and thus we poor Dissenters all are, what in him lieth, left without the Pale of the Church, to be an easie Prey to the next Herd of Devils that shall chance to light upon us. These Men make the Kingdom of God to be Ceremony and Circumstance with a witness, in as much as they will not vouchsafe to reckon those amongst Christians, that want but the supposed Compliment, or finishing of the Imposition of the Hands of a Diocesan Bishop on their Ministers at their Ordination, though all other requisites be found amongst them. Well, are there none of the Dissenters as Foolish in their way ? Yes verily, there are amongst them some as Ignorant and Uncharitable as their Canonical Neighbours : This wild Fancy walks sometimes in a Cloak as well as in a Gown and Cassock ; some there are that think it can never be as it should be with the Kingdom of God, till all Ceremonies but their own (for 'tis impossible to Worship God with external Worship, without some Ceremony or other) be laid aside, they have such extravagant Conceits about the Ceremonies used by the Church of *England*, that they be ready to conclude that the Salvation of such as use them, is almost as impossible, as 'tis for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle. When they think fit to speak of a Church-man, in whom perhaps there's some good thing that they cannot but see, they speak of it with a *But*. But he is a Church-man, But he is for the Liturgy ; as if his not being a Dissenter, or not Worshipping God just in such a way and manner as they, did marr all the good that was in him, and

make it to be nothing. — The truth is, there is such a dictating, domineering Spirit in Men of all sorts, that every conceited Man would be a Teacher and Ruler to all the rest. The conceited Episcopal Man would have all the Nation follow his Fashion, and bow down to his Idol (I mean, his excessively valued Ceremonies); the proud Presbyterian would have all observe his Directory; and the proud Independent would have all take his Covenant, and conform to his Customs and Usages; and if these cannot have their Wills (and God forbid they should) they utter their Complaints, and vent their Predictions, as if for want hereof all the Storms were raised that have so long threatned the sinking of the Church. Whereas the wise, and humble, and peaceable among all sorts consider, that seeing the Kingdom of God consisteth not in Ceremony or Circumstance of External Worship; a variety and diversity herein may well be allow'd unto Persons of different Sentiments and Apprehensions, without any damage done to the Glory of the Divine Government. And that this was the Apostle's mind is manifest from this, that when he considers the difference between the *Jew* and *Gentile*, about the Observation of Holidays, he doth not command one to conform his Opinion and Practice to the others, but adviseth each to act according to his own Perswasion therein, at the same time maintaining a Charitable Frame of Spirit towards his differing Neighbour, *Rom.* 14. 5. If he had thought that an exact Uniformity in the External of Worship had been necessary, he would not have given such Advice as he there gives, no, he would have Dogmatically determined which was in the Right, and Authoritatively commanded the other to conform to him.

### Third Inference.

A farther Union amongst Protestants is very desirable, seeing these smaller matters that I have been discoursing of, are of such a nature, that a Man may be under the saving Influence of the Spirit of Holiness, and a good Subject to the King of Heaven, which way so ever he acts with respect to them. 'Tis ten thousand pities that a Difference in Opinion and Practice herein should cause such distances and withdrawals one from another, as it doth. I acknowledge there is great cause of Thanksgiving to God, that there is such an Union in Doctrinals amongst us as there is, and I account the Governments calling

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Protestant Dissenting Ministers to Subscribe the Articles of the Church of *England* a very good Providence, as their Orthodoxy, in matters of Faith, is thereby manifested to all the World. But that this is all the Union that is to be wished, no Person of Understanding and Honesty will dare to affirm. It were to be wished that what is sinfully imposed on one side was dropped, and what is needlessly scrupled on the other side was for Peace sake complied with, that the Names of Church-men and Dissenters, Presbyterian and Independent might be happily lost in an honest and beneficial Union, that our Name may be one, our Hearts as one, and our Way one, to the painful Envy and Grief of Hell and *Rome*. I do unfeignedly lament the Spirit of Faction and Partyism that I see amongst Dissenters, as well as Church-men. Biggotry is not the Sin of any particular Party. Ah what a dismal thing is it, that when our Holy Bible tells us plainly, that the Kingdom of God is not promoted by these little Things, we should stand aloof from one another upon account of them, as if we were afraid of being Infected with mortal Disease! Seeing a Man's acceptance with God depends not upon his using this way of Worship or that, why should we *totally* separate from those who Worship with some little Irregularities, as if they were Worshipers of a false God? Or why should they totally deny their Presence at our Assemblies, because of the absence of those Ceremonies that they themselves acknowledge to be indifferent? Let us pray, that where Persons are otherwise minded about the Worship of God than the Word of God directs, God would reveal it to them, as it is expressed *Phil.* 3. 15. that the domineering imposing Humour on one hand, and the needless hurtful Scrupulosity on the other being laid aside, we may all walk together in Love, becoming the Gospel of Love and Peace. You that desire the Peace of *Jerusalem* pray for this, pray heartily, pray without ceasing, you shall prosper that thus love the Church of God, *Psalms* 122. 6.

#### Fourth Inference.

'Tis no sin for a Christian in some cases to conceal his Opinion as to these lesser Matters. Yea, 'tis a plain Duty in some cases. *Rom.* 14. 22. *Haft thou Faith, have it to thy self before God. i. e.* "Haft thou more knowledge than he, to believe those things to be lawful, which he judgeth to be sin, keep thy Knowledge and Belief to thy self, to justify thy Judgment

“ment to God, but use it not to the hurt of others. [Mr. Baxter.] This Text seems primarily to direct the strong Christian who hath more Knowledge of his Christian Liberty than his Brother, and can without scruple do those things which the weaker Christian sticks at ; and the Duty enjoined seems to be this, that such an one should not needlessly divulge his Opinion, nor use his Liberty to the Scandalizing of his Brother. It is also of use to direct the weak scrupulous Christian, who though he hath a strong Perswasion, that such or such a Thing would be sin to him, yet should not needlessly divulge his Scruples, when he is not call'd to do what he scrupleth; and when the mentioning of his Scruples might disturb his Brothers quiet; who can do that thing without wronging his Conscience or [it may be] offending of God, the thing being indiffent, and so lawful to be done or not done, according as a Man is perswaded in his Conscience. And thus the Apostle seems to mean by that in the 5th verse, *Let every Man be fully perswaded in his own mind.* Q. d. With respect to these disputed Matters, let every Man act according to the Light he hath received, but not be forward to spread his Opinion for the disturbing and troubling of others, seeing the Glory of God is not promoted by our contending about these lesser matters; seeing the Kingdom of Christ is not furthered, nor the Souls of Men advantaged by gaining Men to our Opinions about them. Let it suffice us that we have the liberty of our own Thoughts and Actions, and not insist upon them when we have far greater and more useful things to talk of, and press upon one another wherein we are all agreed. Wherefore when a Man [that hath no manifest Call to declare his Judgment about these smaller Matters] shall purposely for peace sake refuse the distinguishing Name of [suppose] Presbyterian or Independent, and shall rather chuse to be called a Christian, a Protestant, or an United Brother, he is not I think to be looked upon and condemned as an Hypocrite, walking *Laodicean*, or *Linsy-woolsey* Christian. Nor will any Person so judge such, but those whose Opinion is (as one said) more than their Religion, and who delight in the supposed Honour [but real Shame] of being the Heads of Schismatical Parties.



*Second use of Reprehension,*

And here these several sorts following are to be reprov'd, *sc.*

1. *Tyrannical Church Imposers.*

2. *Factionous Preachers.*

3. *Schismatical Dividers.*

4. *Proud Contemnners.*

5. *Uncharitable Judges.*

6. *Hypocritical Triflers.*

1. *Tyrannical Church Imposers.* I mean here all such pretended or real Church-Officers, as make Conformity to their Opinions and Practices about these lesser Matters, the indispensable condition of Communion with them. I call such Tyrannical Imposers, because they act herein Arbitrarily without the Divine Warrant, and hereby Lord it over God's Heritage. This Spirit is too visible in the World at this Day; some deny Publick Baptism to Children, if their Parents will not consent to have them signed with the sign of the Cross, or if they themselves will engage for their Children, and refuse to find Sureties (or Godfathers and Godmothers) for them; though neither of these be commanded in the Word, and both be look'd on as unlawful and sinful by those who offer their Children to be Baptised. They refuse to give the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to Persons (in the Judgment of strictest Charity, Penitent Believers competently instructed) except they will receive it Kneeling; though Christ or his Apostles never so Administred it, and though the Persons that would join with them think it would be sin in them so to receive it. Others will not admit Persons to their Communion, unless they will submit to be examined by Officers that are neither Preachers of the Word, nor Dispensers of the Sacraments; though the Divine Right of that Office be controverted by the Learned, and the Persons refusing to be so examined verily think it 'is not an Ordinance of Christ. Others will not admit Persons to their Communion, except they will (besides their declaring their Knowledge of the Doctrine of Christian Religion, and professing their Belief of it, and purposes of living in all things suitable to it) be obliged to give an account of their Experiences to the Society, or the Heads of them, that they may judge not only of their Knowledge, but also of the Sincerity and Truth of their Profession, at least of the Credibility of the Appearances of their Sincerity and Truth. Others will have no Communion at the Lord's



Lord's Table with those that have been Baptized in their Infancy, unless they will renounce their Baptism, by being Baptized again. All these are to be blamed. Now I do not at this time blame-one Party or other, for acting themselves according as they are respectively perswaded, nor for Admitting others to do the like that are of the same mind with them, and are Volunteers in what they do. But that which is justly re-provable, and which my Text and Doctrine directs me to re-prove, is Persons looking upon those that are otherwise minded, and dealing with them, as if they were meer impenitent Pagans, denying to them the means of Salvation; as if these things were of the Substance of Religion, and a Man could not be a good Christian, unless he was as to these Things altogether of their Mind. This is but too like the hateful Cruelty of the *Athenian* Robber, the condition of Lodging with whom was, to be made just the length of his Bed, by disjointing, stretching if too short, or by dismembring, chopping off if two long. Away with this Church Tyranny, with this intrenching upon Christ's Prerogative, and let's be content with such Conditions of Church Fellowship, as he in Wisdom and Goodness hath appointed. Certainly, what I am speaking against, is a wicked Lording it over the Consciences of Christ's Disciples where-ever 'tis, whither in a Parish Church or separate Meeting, and 'tis directly contrary to that Precept, *Rom. 14. 1. Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye, but not to doubtful Disputations.*

2. A second sort to be reprov'd are, *Fatious Preachers*. Such I mean whose Business it is to commend themselves and Party, *measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves*, as the Apostle speaks, *1 Cor. 10. 12.* Such Ministers (by what Names or Titles soever dignified or distinguished) as under pretence of Orthodoxy, Order, or Decency employ their Wit, and spend their Time and Vigor in justifying, commending, and magnifying the Expressions and Phrases, Habits, Gestures, and Modes used by themselves and Party; villifying and nullifying the Ways and Manners of those that differ from them. O the Sin and Folly of such a Course! it cannot possibly be the effect of a better Cause than base Selfishness, Envy, or Ignorance. How absurd and foolish doth this appear, when we consider the relation that Ministers stand in to the People. They are Ambassadors from God unto Men in Christ's

Christ's stead, to perswade them to be reconciled to God, 2 *Cor.* 5. 20. Their business is by all proper Arguments to perswade Men to take off their Hearts from this World (whose Friendship is Enmity against God, *James* 4. 4.) and set them upon God as their chief Good and only Happiness; in order hereunto they should with the best of their Skill display before Men the attractive amiable Excellencies of God, as discover'd by the Works of Creation, common Providence and Redemption, and disgrace the World as a Competitor and Rival with God, by shewing its unsuitableness, uncertainty, and insufficiency, &c. Now what madness is it, instead hereof, to be continually or frequently harping upon the Decency, Comeliness, or Usefulness of such and such Ceremonies, and the Excellency of such Churches as make use of them? — How absurd is it to be continually or frequently industriously crying of them down, and applauding such Churches as use them not, to be defending, justifying, and pressing such or such particular Modes of expressing the Doctrines of Christian Religion; and thereby, at least tacitly, condemning and disgracing others, that, it may be, are altogether as Orthodox, neither being in terms the Expressions of Holy Scripture? 'Tis indeed a deplorable Case, that the Ambassadors of the King of Heaven should so much mistake the Design of their Negotiation. If the King of *England* should send an Ambassador to Treat with his Enemies (his revolted Subjects) and proffer them their Lives in case they will return to their Allegiance, confess with Shame and Remorse their Rebellion, would it not be abominable trifling in the Ambassador, if he should spend his time chiefly in instructing them what Cloaths they should wear, and what Gestures they should keep when they come into the King's Presence? The Application is easie. —

3. *Schismatical Dividers* are to be reprov'd. Such in Christian Societies, I mean, who, if they cannot have their Wills as to little Trifles, stick not at renting and tearing all to pieces, by faulting the Ministers Methods, and prejudicing the Church against him. There are a sort of Men in the World, who, tho' they have hardly sense enough to apprehend, the plainest Preaching, are yet so conceited and proud, as to think themselves qualified to be, at least, Sides-Men with their Minister in all his Acts of Rule and Government, if not wise enough to go before and lead him. These, if every thing be not done in the Church according to their Capricio and Humour, if the Mini-

ster do not Preach such a particular Doctrine as they think will be most Edifying, and in such Words and Phrases as they think most sound ; if he proceed not in the Government of the Church according to their Model, and take them not with him to judge of his Administrations ; they will never leave working like Moles, till they have undermined him. Though they cannot charge their Minister with Preaching or Ruling contrary to the Word of God, yet if he do not these things just as they have seen and heard them done in some other Churches, which they are pleased to pronounce the most Pure ; if all be not done according to the Dictates of such or such a Minister, whose Person they have in Admiration, they will withdraw themselves from the Communion, buz about their Discontents, till they have bred such a Schism, as exceeds the Ministers Skill to unite and heal. I dare not say that all such are of their Father the Devil, but I will boldly affirm, that his Works they do, and that they are *bercin and so far* Pests and Plagues to Christian Societies. And 'tis my serious Thought, that if God in Mercy doth not by some speedy unexpected Providence prevent it, this sort of Men will ruine our Liberty, and bring us into miserable Confusion. Friends, if you call this Railing, I cannot help it, but this shall support me, that God hath commanded me to mark them which cause Divisions, *Rom. 16. 17.* and that if I uprightly do my Duty, God will at last acquit me, tho' Men for the present condemn me ; God will for Christ's sake shew me his reconciled Face, tho' Men (my Acquaintance and Friends) turn their backs upon me, and will not vouchsafe to hear me, I say to you as the Apostle in another case, *2 Cor. 11. 1. Would to God you could bear with me a little, and indeed bear with me.* I have no delight in offending any Body, be sure not in troubling those whom I have found Comforters of me, and from whom I might possibly yet expect further Comfort : I know Discourses of this nature are not pleasant to either the Guilty or Innocent, and you may assure your selves I have as little pleasure in speaking them, as you have in hearing them. But I say as *David to Eliab, 1 Sam. 17. 29. Is there not a cause ?* Is not this that I am speaking against a Sin ? And hath it not done Mischief these many Years in this Nation, and particularly in this place ? Doth not this dividing Spirit naturally lead to the levelling the Ministry with the People, and destroying the necessary distinction of Teachers and Learners, Rulers and ruled in Churches ? And is not this the way, the high-

way, to Christianity-Ruining, Quakerism, and Fanaticism? And am not I a Watch-man, and shall not a Watchman speak when he seeth Evil approaching? You will cut a Dog's throat that will not open when he should, and the Spirit of God compares cowardly silent Ministers (that tell not the People of their Sin and Danger) to dumb Dogs that cannot bark; and what the Lot of a People is like to be, that have such Ministers, you may see, *Isa. 56 9, 10. All the Beasts of the Field come to devour, yea all the Beasts in the Forest, &c.*

4. *Proud Contemners* are to be reprov'd. Such, I mean, who having Knowledge and a greater Latitude than others, do therefore despise and condemn their Christian Brethren, that, having less Knowledge, make more Scruples than they. This was the fault of the converted *Gentile* in the Apostle's Time, and this is (without Rancour I speak it) the fault of the more Knowing (if more knowing) and less Scrupulous Church-man at this Day. There was in the Apostles Day a dispute between the converted *Jews* and *Gentiles* about the Lawfulness of Eating such and such Meats, and the necessity of keeping such and such *Mosaick* Holy-days or Festivals, the converted *Jew* thought that the coming of the Messiah was to Establish the *Jewish* Polity and *Mosaick* Institution; therefore, tho' he believed in Christ, yet he durst not but observe the Ceremonial Law. Wherefore he conscientiously kept the *Jewish* Feasts enjoined by that Law, and forbore those Meats that were by that Law pronounced Unclean.

The Converted *Gentile* being better informed, took no notice of the Precepts or Prohibitions of that Law, but eat any Meats, and took no notice of those Feasts, *Rom. 14. 2, 5.* This diversity of Opinion and Practice in these two Parties of Christians, occasioned a sinful Distemper of Mind in both, one against another; the Distemper of Mind that the converted *Gentile* sinfully harbour'd against his Brother was proud Contempt, as we learn by the Apostle's prohibition, *ver. 3. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not.* By this it appears, that he did despise him; he looked upon him as a scrupulous humour-some Fool. Brethren, we have a like Case in this our day. Some there are that think we be under the Gospel tied up to all the Circumstances of Worship, as strictly as the *Jews* were heretofore under the Dispensation of *Moses*, and that nothing is to admitted in or about the Worship of God, but what is

commanded in Scripture.— There are others who think that we are not so strictly tied up under the Gospel, but that if the Direction of Scripture be observ'd, as to the Object of Worship, the recommending Mediator, and the assisting Spirit; if God the Father, Son and Spirit be Worshipped, and we present our Adorations by the Lord Jesus, in the strength and vertue of the Holy Spirit; if the Doctrine preach'd be according to the Analogy of Faith, our Prayers suitable to the Directory for Prayer commonly called the *Lord's Prayer*; if we use no Sacraments but such as Christ hath appointed, and all be done in Sincerity and Truth, Decency and Order unto Edification; they think their Worship nevertheless acceptable to God; if in it they observe some Ceremonies of Man's appointing: This is the profess'd Judgment of the Church of *England*; for these are her Words, *sc.* "*We think it convenient, that every Country should use such Ceremonies as they shall think best to the setting forth of God's Honour and Glory,*—

I undertake not to determine at this time which is in the Right here, but this I say, those Church-men are to blame that do despise and vilify those who differ from them. 'Tis their Sin, if they look upon and treat a Person as an ignorant humourfome Fool, meerly because he scruples those things that they can dispense with in the Worship of God. 'Tis Uncharitable and Unchristian for such to overlook the Substantial Piety, and serious Godliness that may be in such, meerly because they have not the Compliment and Finishing of supposed Orthodoxy, in the business of Circumstance and Ceremony, of which even the Church of *England* her self saith; *That the keeping or omitting of a Ceremony is in it self but a small thing.* When a Church-man therefore shall in scornful Pride look a-wry upon an humble, peaceable, pious, just, charitable Christian, meerly because he is a Dissenter from his Ceremonies, he sins against the Law of Christ, and walks unsuitably to the Principles of his own Church.

5. *Uncharitable Judges* are to be reprov'd. Such, I mean, as allow themselves to Condemn Persons as Graceless and Prophanes, upon account of their using such Liberty as they scruple. This was the fault of the Converted *Jew*, as we learn by the Words of the Apostle, *Let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth.* And this (to speak impartially) is the fault of the Censorious Dissenter. As the *Jews* heretofore condemned the *Gentile*

*tile*, as a prophane wicked Person for his eating of Meats forbidden by the Ceremonial Law ; so some Dissenters (thanks be to God 'tis but some) are ready to condemn those of the Church of *England* as Prophane and Graceless, upon account of their use of the Church Forms and Liturgy. Those of them that are not visibly Prophane and Irreligious, they censure them as meer Formalists ; the best they can think of them is, that they are sober Moral Persons, which by the way a meer Pagan may be.

If it be said that they are consciencious and serious in their Way, that they are frequent at their Devotions. O say these Pragmatical Censurers, 'tis well if they don't rest in their Duties, thereby intimating that they fear they do.— If their Charity be mentioned, O say these, it may be they think to Merit by their Alms ; Are not the Papists Charitable ? Thus they audaciously step into God's Throne, judging Mens Hearts with which they have nothing to do.

Brethren, I tell you faithfully, this is an evil and wicked thing, 'tis against the plain Word of God, which saith, *Judge not, that ye be not judged*, Matth. 7. 1. *Let us not judge one another any more*, Rom. 14. 13. 'Tis a sin against the Doctrine of my Text : For if the Kingdom of God consisteth not in these smaller Matters, Persons of different, yea contrary Opinions and Perswasions about them, may both (as you have already heard) be the good and acceptable Subjects of the Lord Redeemer. Wherefore 'tis a very unrighteous Thing to condemn a Man as a Disloyal Subject of the Lord Jesus for that which will not, cannot possibly prove him to be so, let all be said against it which the nature of the thing will admit. Indeed, such a Spirit is contrary to the drift of the Gospel, that I have as little Charity for such as for any sort of Men whatsoever, that carry the Face of Religion in their Lives. Let but two Texts be considered and compared together, and it will be I think an hard matter to make it out, how such Censorious Persons can be truly good, or (which is the same) real Christians : The Texts are, 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2. *Though I speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal : And though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge ; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I AM NOTHING.* Now compare ver. 5, 7. where 'tis said of this Charity among other



other Things, that it *thinketh no evil, but hopeth all things.*

By this Text I am strongly inclined to think, that Censorious Persons (those that are habitually and prevalently so) do really want that Charity which is essential to Christianity; and so in the midst of their specious Appearances and high Pretensions are *Nothing*. Wherefore methinks Persons should be afraid of being Guilty of a Sin that brings such a Spot as seems not to be the Spot of God's Children. (To use the words, *Deut. 32. 5.*)

6. *Hypocritical Triflers* are to be reprov'd. Such, I mean, as satisfy themselves with adhering to the little things of Opinion, with the Soul-ruining neglect of the Life of Practical Godliness. And whose fault is this? Perhaps you'll say, Alas Friends! this is the fault of most amongst all Parties, this impertinent Devil haunts Church and Meeting-House too. By *him* some are perswaded to think well of themselves, if they keep their Church, say their Prayers Sundays and Holidays, receive the Sacrament according to the Church of *England*, and never go to Meetings. Others think they must needs go to Heaven if they be zealous Dissenters, and never hear the Common Prayer; if they join with the strictest sort, and but get to be Church-Members, and zealously cry down all that differ from them; they think they be as safe from the danger of Damnation, as those in *Noah's Ark* were from the danger of Perishing by the Flood. Thus do some of both sides dream, though they be Ignorant, Earthly, Sensual, Impenitent, Proud, Wrathful, and unto every good work Reprobate.

Foolish Wretches, how do they mock their God, and cheat their own Souls! How hateful is their Hypocrisy! They strive for a Ceremony, and neglect the Substance of Religion; they scruple a Ceremony, and yet live in the Commission of gross Sins. One he is for Decency and Order, but neglects Sincerity and Truth. Another he is tooth and nail against Superstition and Will-worship, and the same time indulgeth himself in the more hateful and mischievous Sin of Dissimulation and Hypocrisy. Poor Souls! what will their Opinions avail them in the Day of their Account, when their Hypocrisy shall be detected and laid open, and they shall by the Sword of Justice be cut in sunder, and have their Portion with their Fellow-Hypocrites in Hell! As high as their Confidences are built, 'tis certain they must (if they Repent not) fall into the bottomless



less Pit, where their Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched; where there is (Eternally) weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, *Matth. 24. 51. Mark 9. 44.*

I conclude my Discourses on this part of my Text with this one

*Exhortation.*

To poor weak Christians that are ready to stumble, and be turned out of the way upon account of the many and various Opinions that there are amongst Christians at this day. Be you assured, that you may please God, gain his Favour and Blessing on Earth, glorify him before Men, be happy in your Death, and be eternally Glorified with him in Heaven hereafter, of which Party of these differing Christians soever you be. Always provided you Act according to your Light, and sincerely live those grand Duties which none dispute or question. That is to say, if you give up your selves to God as to your chief Good and last End, to love and serve him before all, if you accept the Lord Jesus for your All-sufficient Saviour, and obey and trust him, if you walk after the Spirit speaking in and by the Scriptures, endeavouring to die unto the World to Crucify the Flesh and resist the Devil: If you live a Sober, Righteous, and Godly Life, loving God with all your Heart, and your Neighbour as your selves, and if you persevere herein unto the end, depending upon the Merits and Mediation of Christ, for your Pardon and Acceptance, **You shall be Saved**, which Party of Protestants soever you side with; or, if you never trouble your selves with the Disputes or Contests amongst them. Your being of one Opinion or other as to these smaller Matters, **cannot** possibly hinder your eternal Salvation at last, or your comfortable Walking with God here, so you conscientiously mind the Substance of Religion, wherein all are agreed. For 'tis a certain Truth, (I pray you to remember it) That no one Party of Protestants is so in the Right as to Christian Religion, that the other be damningly Wrong; for the Controversy amongst them is not about those Things that are **Necessary to Salvation**, in these they are **All Agreed**. Wherefore 'tis undoubtedly certain, that a Church-man may be an Holy Man, and be Saved.— A Dissenter, of one sort or another (whether Presbyterian, Independent, or Anabaptist) may be an Holy Man, and be Saved. Yea, they will be such infallibly,

infallibly, if they live the Religion they profess, I doubt not, but that Heaven is peopled with all these (though there they be of one Mind.) Wherefore the question is not, Which is the Way to Heaven, by Church or by Meeting? If it was, I would boldly say, either is the Way. But the question is, Which is the nearest, neatest, straightest Way? And here I'll leave every one to judge for himself. Only this for a Conclusion. I exhort you (having given up your selves to God by Christ as aforesaid) to put your selves under the Pastoral Care of such a Ministry, as in your most deliberate Judgment you think best qualify'd with Ministerial Gifts and Graces, and most Faithful in the use of them for the good of Souls, and such as you have found by real and undoubted Experience to be most useful to you. And when you have made your Choice, remember your Duty, and in Humility, Meekness and Patience, learn of them, as of your Spiritual Guides, and submit your selves to them as to your Spiritual Rulers under Christ, according to the Word; and you will find the Blessing from Heaven descending upon your Souls in such a manner as will abundantly satisfy you, that you are going to Heaven, whither you hear in a Church or Meeting-House. *For the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.*

F I N I S.



ERRATA.

**F**irst Page Epistle line 5. penult, for *Opinions* read *Ceremonies*. Page 2. line 10. for of *r. our*. Page 9. line 5. for *him* *r. himself*. Page 13. l. 5. penult, dele *them*.

